

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3105
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL PALERMO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 9838

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: MEETING OF SOCIALIST PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, MAY 24-25

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE SOCIALIST PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET
IN ROME ON MAY 24-25 AND GAVE NEARLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT TO
PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI AND THE POLITICAL POSITIONS WHICH
HE ENUNCIATED. IN THE MAJOR SPEECH OF THE SESSION CRAXI
DECLARED THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT
THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT BUT WILL NOT BE SILENT
WHEN IT DISAGREES WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND WILL
CONTINUE TO TRY "TO OVERCOME CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC HEGEMONY"
IN ITALIAN POLITICS. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE RATIFIED THIS
POSITION AND ALSO CALLED FOR THE REJECTION OF THE REFERENDUM
ON THE REALE LAW THOUGH LEAVING SOCIALISTS FREE TO VOTE
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AS THEY WISH ON THE ISSUE. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
MEETING SEALED CRAXI'S VIRTUALLY COMPLETE CONTROL OF
THE PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. MEETING IN ROME ON MAY 24-25, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY HELD A REVIEW OF THE PARTY'S
POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES IN THE WAKE OF THE TURIN PARTY

CONGRESS, THE MORO AFFAIR AND THE OUTCOME OF THE FIRST ROUND OF ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. THE SESSION WAS HELD IN A SPIRIT OF UNUSUAL, PROBABLY UNPRECEDENTED, COMITY. CRAXI, THE VICTOR OF THE TURIN PARTY CONGRESS, WAW ADDITIONALLY THE VICTOR OF THE MAY 14-15 ELECTIONS IN WHICH THE SOCIALISTS IMPROVED THEIR POSITION BY SOME 40 PERCENT OVER THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTION. AS A RESULT, IN THE WEEK OR SO PRECEDING THE SESSION, FACTIONAL OPPOSITION MELTED AWAY TO THE EXTENT THAT DE MARTINO AND MANCA DISSOLVED THEIR FACTION AND MANCINI MAINTAINED HIS ONLY FORMALLY. ACHILLI AND HIS TINY FACTION ALONE HELD OUT. AS A CONSEQUENCE, SO LITTLE DISAGREEMENT WAS EXPRESSED THAT THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED A DAY EARLIER THAN SCHEDULED.

CRAXI'S REPORT

2. THE SESSION OPENED WITH A REPORT BY CRAXI DEFENDING HIS HANDLING OF THE MORO AFFAIR AND OUTLINING THE PARTY'S FUTURE POLITICAL STRATEGY. THE PARTY SECRETARY STATED THAT THE SOCIALISTS WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT WHICH WAS NECESSARY TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THE CRISIS OF LAW AND ORDER. BUT SOCIALIST AUTONOMY WOULD BE THE PARTY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLE. HE
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WARNED THAT HIS PARTY WOULD NOT BE SILENT WHEN IT DISAGREED WITH GOVERNMENT POLICIES, ADDING THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE ITS APOLOGISTS AND ITS CRITICS AND MAKING IT PLAIN THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY WOULD BE AMONG THE LATTER. ELABORATING THIS THEME, CRAXI RAILED BOTH AGAINST CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC HEGEMONY, WHICH IT REMAINED A SOCIALIST OBJECTIVE TO DESTROY, AND AGAINST A POPULAR FRONT UNDER COMMUNIST DIRECTION. THUS THERE WOULD BE NO BREAK WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT BUT EQUALLY NO "TURNING BACK TO THE OLD CENTER-LEFT FORMULA" IN WHICH THE SOCIALIST PARTY WAS IN A SUBORDINATE POSITION. CRAXI INTERPRETED THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST ROUND OF ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AS SIGNALING THE END TO THE POLARIZATION OF ITALIAN POLITICS AND AS OPENING THE WAY FOR A SIGNIFICANT ROLE FOR AN AUTONOMOUS SOCIALIST PARTY IN COOPERATION WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE. IN THE LATTER CONNECTION CRAXI STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE WHICH HE ATTACHED TO SOCIALIST COOPERATION IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

3. TWO-THIRDS OF CRAXI'S SPEECH WAS SPENT DEFENDING HIS ROLE IN THE MORO CASE. EXPRESSING DEEP RESENTMENT OF THE "CAMPAIGN OF POLEMICAL AGRESSION" AGAINST HIM AND HIS PARTY, CRAXI ACCUSED THE OTHER PARTIES OF USING THE AFFAIR TO HURT THE SOCIALISTS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. FOR THE FUTURE HE CALLED UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE FIRMER ACTION TO SOLVE THE MORO KIDNAPPING AND TO PROTECT THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS FROM RED BRIGADE INFILTRATION. THE MORO CASE MUST NOT BE ONE MORE OF THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC, HE CONCLUDED.

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CRAXI'S CLAQUE

4. LED BY MANCA, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FELL OVER THEMSELVES IN AGREEING WITH THE POSITION OF THEIR LEADER. THERE WERE ONLY TWO EXCEPTIONS--ACHILLI AND HIS SMALL GROUP AND, MORE INTERESTINGLY, CRAXI'S ALLY LOMBARDI WHO COMPLAINED THAT CRAXI HAD SPOKEN TOO LITTLE OF THE ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT WHICH REMAINED THE ONLY

FEASIBLE COURSE FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY GIVEN, LOMBARDI SAID, THE STRENGTHENING OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS ON THE ONE HAND AND THE SOCIALISTS' OWN OPPOSITION TO A NEW CENTER-LEFT ON THE OTHER. LOMBARDI ALSO ARGUED AGAINST CRAXI'S POSITION ON THE REFERENDUM ON THE REALE LAW AND SUCCESS-
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FULLY APPEALED TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO LEAVE SOCIALISTS FREE TO VOTE AS THEY WISH IN THE REFERENDUM.

5. CONCLUDING THE SESSION, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPROVED A DOCUMENT WHICH LAYS DOWN THE PARTY'S POLITICAL COURSE FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THIS STATES:

"THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE REAFFIRMS THE SUPPORT OF SOCIALISTS FOR A POLICY OF NATIONAL UNITY OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES WHICH IS THE MOST FAVORABLE MEANS OF PURSUING THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND OF FOLLOWING A COHERENT ECONOMIC POLICY DESIGNED TO LEAD THE COUNTRY OUT OF CRISIS AND INTO A NEW ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND GREATER EMPLOYMENT.

THE SUCCESS OF THE SOCIALISTS IN THE ELECTIONS OF MAY 14 AND 15 INTERRUPTED THE TREND TOWARD POLARIZATION BEGUN ON JUNE 20, 1976 AND ENCOURAGES THE SOCIALIST PARTY TO DEVELOP INTO AN AUTONOMOUS SOCIALIST POLL WITHIN THE LEFT.

REGARDING THE FORTHCOMING REFERENDA ON PUBLIC FINANCING OF PARTIES AND THE REALE LAW, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, IN ACCORD WITH THE OTHER PARTIES OF THE MAJORITY, CALLS UPON ITS ELECTORATE TO REJECT THE PROPOSALS FOR ABROGATION...BUT EMPHASIZES THAT THE REFERENDA ARE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPRESSING PERSONAL CONVICTIONS AND THE LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE...

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE EMPHASIZES THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF PARTY CONSOLIDATION BEGUN AT
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TURIN AND DEVELOPED IN THE MONTHS SUCCEEDING...

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPROVES THE REPORT OF THE

SECRETARY AND THE DECISIONS AND THE CONDUCT
OF THE DIRECTORATE AND THE SECRETARY WITH
REGARD TO THE ATTEMPTS TO FIND ALL CONSTITUTIONAL
WAYS TO SAVE THE LIFE OF ALDO MORO..."

CONCLUSION

6. CRAXI EMERGED FROM THIS SESSION GREATLY
STRENGTHENED, INDEED WITH THE SUPPORT OF 95 PERCENT
OF THE PARTY CENTRAL ORGANIZATION. GIVEN THE STARTLING
DISSOLUTION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RIVAL FACTION,
CRAXI'S CONTROL OF THE PARTY IS NOW BEYOND ANY SERIOUS
CHALLENGE. OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY ON THE LEFT, REMAINS,
AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE POSITIONS OF CHILLI AND LOMBARDI,
AND COULD SOME DAY DEVELOP INTO A SERIOUS PROBLEM
WITHIN THE PARTY. BUT FOR THE TIME BEING CRAXI IS IN
CLEAR COMMAND AND THE PARTY WILL FOLLOW HIM. CRAXI
RECKONS HE HAS WON--WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY AND IN THE
RECENT ELECTIONS--ON THE BASIS OF "SOCIALIST AUTONOMY"
AND IN THE MONTHS TO COME HE WILL BE LOOKING FOR
EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY HIS PARTY'S INDEPENDENCE
OF THE GOVERNING COALITION THOUGH WITHOUT LEADING TO
A BREAKUP OF IT.GARDNER

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